

The Critic and Good Literature

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1809.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.—1884.

THE CRITIC of August 30th is issued on August 29th—the seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. The correctness of this date is attested by a letter from the Doctor himself, written to dispel a doubt raised in his correspondent's mind by the conflicting statements of a recent biographer. That letter is reproduced in this column without the author's knowledge or consent. We trust, however, that he will pardon the liberty we take in laying it before our readers.

Boston May 8th 1884

My dear Miss Gilder,

*I took my first draught
of that fatal mixture called
atmospheric air on the
29th of August, 1809.*

*My father's record of the fact
is before me on a page of
the "Massachusetts Register",
in the form of a brief footnote
thus:*

"29. Son b."

*The scar which he traces
on the flesh side is glittering
upon it still.*

*Believe me,
Respectfully, Yours,*

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The Attic salt which Nature threw so liberally on the Doctor's mind to keep it fresh and vigorous beyond the limit of three score years and ten, 'is glittering upon it still;' so that the tribute rendered to him to-day by friends and admirers in the Old World and in the New is laid at the feet of a man, old in years, indeed, and in experience, but as young in heart and as clear in intelligence as the latest-born of those who love and honor him.

The year of Dr. Holmes's birth gave five poets to the world, three of whom—Tennyson, Lord Houghton, and he whose birthday we celebrate to-day—still live and sing, while two—Mrs. Browning and Edgar Allan Poe—have passed away. No other year in the present century has been so productive of great singers. And yet the world was better supplied even before they came than it is just now with literary lights, of various sizes and varying in intensity of flame. Some of these were hidden as yet by the walls of the nursery; others were just beginning to blaze up and be seen; others, again, were burning with full lustre; while a few were flickering feebly before going out. Of those who were not yet on the retired list, Crabbe, at fifty-five, stood first in respect of age, with George Colman the younger second, at forty-seven; Rogers was 46, Sydney Smith 40, Wordsworth 39, Scott 38, Coleridge 37, Southey and Campbell 35, Lamb 34; More and Brougham 30, Leigh Hunt and Sheridan Knowles 25, Allan Cunningham 24, Byron 21, 'Barry Cornwall' 19, Shelley 17, Lockhart 15, Keats, Talfourd and Carlyle 14, Hartley Coleridge 13, Hood 11, Macaulay and Sir Henry Taylor 9, Praed 7, Hengist Horne 6, and Bulwer and Beaconsfield each 4. In America the author of the Declaration of Independence was still living at the age of 66; Webster and Irving were as yet young men; Everett, Choate, Bancroft and the author of 'Home, Sweet Home,' were boys; while of the greater poets Freneau was 57, R. H. Dana 22, Halleck 19, Sprague 18, Bryant 15, Drake 14, Emerson 6, Longfellow and Whittier each 2, and Samuel Francis Smith—author of 'My Country 'tis of Thee,' and the only one of 'The Boys' named by Dr. Holmes in his poem of that title—was 1. In that year Thomas Holcroft and Thomas Paine both died, and in the same year Abraham Lincoln was born.

Many men and women who were already living when Dr. Holmes took his 'first draught of that fatal mixture called atmospheric air' are living still in a green old age, accompanied, as it should be, by 'honor, love, obedience, troops of friends;' but there is not one of these, nor of those of a later generation, who has given more pleasure, or done more good in the world in various ways, than the honored Autocrat whom the votes of THE CRITIC's readers, fairly representing, as we believe, the will of the English-speaking world, have named as the first of living American men-of-letters. We wish to say here that, so far as we know, Dr. Holmes was not aware, until this day, of the compliment to be paid him on his birthday. Should he modestly deprecate it, he may be referred to the Professor-at-the-Breakfast-Table's remarks prefatory to the discourse on the 'surprise party'—to wit: 'I should like to know if we are not at liberty to have a good time together, and say the pleasantest things we can think of to each other, when any of us reaches his thirtieth, or fortieth, or fiftieth, or eightieth birthday'—or even his seventy-fifth! The 'pleasant things' that follow this introduction are uttered spontaneously. The train was already laid: all that THE CRITIC had to do was to apply the match. Many persons who doubtless would have joined gladly in rendering tribute to the Autocrat on this occasion were either abroad or out of reach of the domestic mails.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Pray let my voice be admitted to swell the chorus of good wishes to the excellent veteran of letters and delightful man whose birthday is August the 29th. What an auspicious birthday—within one day of Goethe's!

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

ATHENÆUM CLUB, PALL MALL, S. W., August 6th, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

In reply to your note I can only say that I very gladly join in congratulating Dr. Holmes on reaching his seventy-fifth birthday. Few can look back on so many useful,

cheerful years as he who has made so many hearts merry with the wit and wisdom that linger in the memory when the laughter is over. May the smiles he has brought to the faces of his friends always shine upon him, and the warmth of his own genial nature keep the frost of age from chilling the springs of mirth that bubble up so freshly in the heart of our dear and honored Autocrat.

My father would join with me in all good wishes, were not mind and memory too feeble to understand the occasion and fitly respond to your letter.

CONCORD, MASS., Aug. 15, 1884.

L. M. ALCOTT.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

It is a pleasure to do my part towards the tribute which you are preparing for Dr. Holmes, and thus to make some recognition of the enjoyment which he has given all of us. I do not remember the time when 'The Dorchester Giant' and 'The Oysterman' did not form a part of my mental treasures; but I think few of us in those days, in spite of 'Old Ironsides,' suspected the treasures of wisdom and poetry which the hard-working physician was storing up, to become our property as soon as he should find leisure to make use of it. I think it is Dr. Holmes himself who warns a young writer against beginning with the reputation of a 'funny man,' and it is certain that he himself, in the years before 'The Autocrat'—a college poet, and writer of commencement and Phi Beta verses,—never had the credit of the powers that were in him. It is common enough for a new writer, by a single book, to achieve a brilliant reputation at one stroke; but at the age of fifty, with a well established rank as the best writer of his type—but that a narrow and not very exalted type,—to build a new reputation by the side of the old, and take his place as a writer of the first rank, is a rare and difficult thing. And it is not merely the charm of the book as a whole—the true test of literary excellence: in every specialty his genius found here its culmination. The 'Chambered Nautilus' is the poem by which he will always be best known; the 'One-hoss Shay' is his best bit of humor; the 'Young Fellow Called John' is as genuine and dramatic a creation of fiction in the delineation of American life as Natty Bumppo or Sam Lawton. I would not, even counting 'The Professor' as one book with 'The Autocrat,' call him a man of one book. Since its publication his name has stood without question in the first rank of American writers; nevertheless, as it was 'The Autocrat' that first showed the world what he was, it is this with which his name will always be principally associated.

MADISON, WIS., Aug. 20, 1884. WILLIAM F. ALLEN.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I feel that I owe an abiding debt of gratitude to Dr. Holmes, and this is a good chance to pay a trifling installment on account. My attention was drawn to the Autocrat by my school teacher. She was a maiden lady of mature years and pronounced opinions, and, finding her one day at recess-time reading *The Atlantic* and occasionally beaming to herself as if vastly entertained, I asked to see the book. 'Holmes,' she said, 'is delightful. He is forever saying the very things I've been thinking to myself. You should read him.' The reading came to me as a great discovery. How many amazing and lovely things a man could say in a few simple words. At the same time, to my callow mind, one paragraph in 'The Autocrat' struck me as deeply and profoundly commonplace. There were two lovers walking on Boston Common, and when they reached a certain place on Tremont Street Mall, he asked her if she would take the Long Path with him. Now the long path I knew began at West Street and straggled over the hill toward the Back Bay. She said she would, and then the chapter ended. How dull! What singular lovers. They would have found it much pleasanter to go up Park Street Mall and down Beacon Street Mall. After pondering this

thing in a boyish way for five years, it suddenly came to me that the 'Long Path' was the gate to that Beautiful Country where Married Lovers dwell.

My debt of gratitude is in this discovery, that poetry can be wrapped in the russet gown of prose.

NEW YORK, August 11, 1884.

CHARLES BARNARD.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

You come not as the asker of a favor but collector of a debt. But how pay our dues, and how meet the for-once-delightful tax and levy, to a man who has laid us under such heavy and grateful bonds? It is said Agassiz told Humboldt he wished to be under everlasting obligation to him for a small sum of money. How much of our intellectual treasure is the gift of Dr. Holmes, as a poet, and a critic who punctures vice and folly with a lancet so smooth and keen it scarce inflicts any pain, and who could never in his medical profession have so promoted the health of the community as he has by his wise and wholesome words. How we have forgot suffering in his, and our own, contagious smile! His discharges of satire have been strong and clean as those of fulminating silver, without smoke or stain. His wit has no gall or malignant edge, but melts into humor, and never lacks salve for what needful wound it makes. On the list of authors, headed in the English tongue of our day by Walter Scott, his praise is to have increased the permanent stock of innocent joy, without a syllable of bitter record or one ill-tempered tone. For what is morbid in our mood there is no morsel at his board. It is all pure food and good cheer.

C. A. BARTOL.

MANCHESTER, MASS., 12 August, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

If my Muse were not on a fishing excursion in the wilds of Wisconsin, she would gladly add her feeble voice to the chorus of praise which you have engaged for the honored Autocrat on his seventy-fifth birthday. But on a recent expedition in search of black bass, she (the Muse) had an involuntary ducking, caught an awful cold, and can therefore only croak in prose. If you have ever 'gone a-fishing,' it may be known to you that your intellect is on such occasions apt to take flight and refuse to obey your summons. Being at present in this predicament, I am utterly unable to find words capable of expressing my warm regard for Dr. Holmes; my admiration for the sweet and wholesome spirit which animates all that he has written, and my personal indebtedness to him for the intellectual stimulus which I have derived from his delightful prose and his still more delightful verse. May he live long enough to give us an Autocrat at the dinner-table, and, if possible, one at the supper-table too. May a long procession of birthdays yet march down upon him; for, unlike Tithonus, he secured from the gods, who gave him immortality, also eternal youth.

HJALMAR H. BOYSEN.

LAKE GENEVA, WIS., Aug. 21, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

It is a happy thought that has prompted the celebration of Dr. Holmes's birthday by issuing a number of THE CRITIC which shall be specially devoted to eulogizing his genius and commemorating his usefulness. And, as one of the great multitude of people who admire the writer and like the man, I am glad to have a chance to add a small leaf to the chaplet which you propose to weave for him.

What a beneficent and happy life Dr. Holmes's has been! How many hearts he has cheered and how many homes he has enlivened with his genial philosophy and delicious humor! I suppose there are very few of us undistinguished people, who would be willing to exchange our own identity for that of any other man. But if anybody could swap

himself for some other body and spirit, I think Dr. Holmes would be the first man applied for as a substitute for the tenant who proposed to vacate his own particular and individual premises. He has shown in all his works so much kindness, wisdom and tenderness, that it is difficult to say whether he is most loved or most admired by his fellowmen.

It is a wonderful thing that any man should be so richly endowed as Dr. Holmes has been with the qualities that have made his writings thrice-welcome in every land where the English language is spoken. To unnumbered readers he has come as a personal friend, with a warm grasp of the hand, and a rippling smile on his face. His heaven-born gifts have been great and multifarious, and richly has he expended them for the cheer of his day and generation. Long may his muse tarry with us, and long may he live to breathe the incense which his grateful countrymen daily burn before him!

NEWARK, N. J., Aug. 20, 1884.

NOAH BROOKS.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

Your note, by various mishaps, reaches me too late for my reply to find place among your congratulations to Dr. Holmes. I am sorry; for I should have been very glad to be numbered among the fortunate people of this generation who have from their childhood thought of him with respectful gratitude, and who now heartily wish him years of happiness and health.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

NORTH ANDOVER, MASS., 23 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

The only right by which my name can appear in such a testimonial as you propose is one which would expand your next issue to a volume, if all who are entitled to it should claim it. As a boy, I was entertained by the Autocrat's delicious humor; as a young man in college, touched and quickened by the warmth of his tenderness; and now, with such maturity as I possess, I still enjoy the humor to the full, sympathize with the tenderness, and learn fresh lessons from so shrewd and genial a philosophy.

FRANCIS BROWN.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Aug. 26, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I have always maintained that the man was especially lucky who was born in the spring, and so was on hand at early seed-time; but it seems it is also good to be born just after the harvest, when the heat and the hurry are over, when Bartlett pears are ripe, when the peach is mellowing, when the grapes are beginning to purple, and the season of 'mellow friendship' is at hand. Evidently no mistake was made in the case of Dr. Holmes. May is in his heart and early autumn in his brain. His star rose upon Nature bountiful. Full barns, full hives, the bees just a little boozy on o'er-ripe peaches and apples, the birds social and gregarious; aftermath in the meadows, milky ears in the cornfield, goldenrod by the wayside, and peace and repose in all the landscape. Let me place upon his table a bouquet of all the sun-loving and August-loving flowers—the first purple asters, evening primrose, meadow-beauty, sea-lavender, wild sunflower, goldenrod, rose-gerardia, autumnaria, chelone, yarrow, marshmallow, a sprig of scarlet lobelia, and a panicle or two of the slender bush clover. Here is the second flowering of the honeysuckle—put that in, too, for May; and here is the first flowering of the fringed gentian—add that for the beauty and serenity of September skies.

There is a passage in Emerson which, when I first read it, I thought of Dr. Holmes, and when I last read it I thought of Dr. Holmes. It occurs in his essay on 'Clubs.' After freeing his mind about the prigs and the roysterers,

he says: 'How delightful after these disturbers is the radiant, playful wit of—one whom I need not name—for in every society there is his representative. Good nature is stronger than tomahawks. His conversation is all pictures; he can reproduce whatever he has seen; he tells the best story in the country, and is of such genial temper that he disposes all others irresistibly to goodhumor and discourse.'

If he should live to be the last leaf upon the tree of our noble band of New England authors, may no rude gust tear him away, but the gentlest of Indian-summer dewdrops loosen his hold.

JOHN BURROUGHS.

WEST PARK, N. Y., 24 August, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

You tell me that if I am an admirer of the Autocrat, and care to join in a friendly tribute to him, you will be glad to print any communication I may send for the 'Holmes number' of THE CRITIC. I have admired and loved Oliver Wendell Holmes since we were boys together in the same class in Harvard; and I should not wish to be omitted in any testimony of affection and honor to him.

I have sometimes fancied that I recognized earlier than most readers the peculiar charm and power in his poetry. It differs from much of our modern lyrical verse in maintaining a current of clear thought throughout. It combines strength with grace, brilliancy with tenderness, and the brightest flashes of wit are in harmony with an unvarying kindness of heart. If Holmes were not so witty a writer, some of the finer and nobler qualities of his song would, I think, be more fully recognized. He is eminently an artist, and perfection of form governs all his work, and is its outcome. But, nevertheless, there are, through his poetry, continual tones of a melody born of inspiration,—lines which linger in the memory with those of Ben Jonson and Herrick, and which will never be forgotten.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

MAGNOLIA, MASS., Aug. 20, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I am glad to have the opportunity of writing in the tribute you propose, to the worth and genius of Dr. Holmes. It is the lot of few writers to be favorites with everybody—a fortune which may be said to be that of the distinguished Autocrat who has conferred so much pleasure on his generation. His bright and abounding wit, his rich humor, natural pathos, and kindly outlook on human nature, have made him a multitude of admirers,—and the strong human interest in whatever he writes has brought him in rapport with all classes of readers. In the prose of 'The Autocrat' and the poetry of 'The Last Leaf' this trait is equally apparent, and seems the predominant characteristic of his genius. It is the 'broad man's heart' that the famous humorist appeals to, and smiles and tears come at the call of the Master.

Certainly, apart from his wise teachings, the idle world owes a heavy debt to this great amuser of his age, whose wit and humor have dispelled so much of the tedium of human life. A delightful gayety and naturalness seems to me to pervade all his work, and the peculiar charm of the page is the writer's unreserve—that he expresses himself. What is plain to the reader of these bright and kindly books, is the fact that the writer is, himself, bright and kindly—that under the gay laughter is a chivalric nature and a generous heart.

I cordially join with you in congratulating this estimable gentleman on his birthday, and in wishing him well. I believe there is but one sentiment in regard to him everywhere—that he may enjoy many more years of health and happiness.

THE BRIARS, VA., Aug. 15, 1884. J. ESTEN COCKE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

It is not Dr. Holmes alone to whom I offer congratulations on his birthday, but also to all the world which he has illuminated. If it is true that 'he who makes one blade of grass to grow in a barren place deserves gratitude,' how much more does he earn both gratitude and affection who makes the weariness and sadness of humanity bloom with smiles and laughter; and brings cheerfulness and hilarity into the dusty ways of daily life! Long may he live and laugh; may even his sorrows smile in the tender consciousness of the alleviation he has given to the sorrows of others, and may he be always glad in the recollections of the past, and the assurance of loving remembrance as long as our mother-tongue is spoken by the race.

WINSTED, CONN., Aug. 22, 1884. ROSE TERRY COOKE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I am glad to hear that your paper is to be the tree (as it were) to which a flock of friendly letters will fly, each like a bird with its little song of congratulation for our friend and distinguished author on his seventy-fifth birthday. How time flies! For it seems so brief an interval since we assembled in Boston under the auspices of *The Atlantic Monthly* to celebrate his threescore and ten. And here he is, vigorous and blithe as ever—rejoicing in his celebrity, and in the success of his posterity.

Now, while the picturesque old homestead, here in Cambridge, in which he was born, is disappearing from the trees and shrubbery around it, to make way for the more imposing college edifices, his fame is building for him, in his own words, 'a more stately mansion' in the hearts of his countrymen.

I am glad to contribute my mite toward the full contribution you will doubtless receive in honor of the Autocrat.

CAMBRIDGE, Aug. 10. CHRISTOPHER P. CRANCH.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I am overwhelmed with unusual work, but it would be impossible for the busiest literary man not to pause gladly for a moment to salute with a blessing the seventy-fifth birthday of the famous author who was never too busy to speak a good word, or to do a kind deed, for his younger brethren. Indeed, his literary brethren, young or old, equally bear him in their hearts, and are equally at a loss to determine whether he be younger or older than all of them. What we do know is that the charm of his genius is perennial, and that as our minds and hearts run along the sparkling line of his achievements, admiration and love are blended for the kindly humorist, the melting poet, the shrewd essayist, who has taught the grave Puritan stock from which he sprang, that wit may enlighten wisdom; and imagination, like a spicy honey-suckle embowering a New England meeting-house, may adorn the sternest morality with beauty, and tenderness, and grace.

ASHFIELD, MASS., Aug. 18. GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

To Oliver Wendell Holmes.

KINSMAN, because of Katerina, sung

By Wendell o'er the long-forgotten sheen
Of lost canals, and wedded near the green
Old fortress wall of Amsterdam the Young,
You are not loved for kindred streams among
Our veins fast flowing, but for wit as keen
As your wise, curious knife, that clears the spleen
Of melancholy—cuts, but ne'er has stung!

Wherever men the laws of healing teach

Your name is honored and your theses read;

Wherever sounds our great colonial speech

From lightened hearts fall blessings on your head;

Ay, by your art, O healer rare, you reach

Past your own life and aid the Future's dead.

NEW YORK, 23 August, 1884.

C. DE K.

Austin Dobson to Dr. Holmes.

I am asked to say, in a general way, how much I rejoice to think your voice still sounds as clear 'at seventy year' as ever it did when it first came hid from the leaf and May of your younger day. (If a kind of jingle should happen to mingle with this line of mine, it is yet sincere.) May you sing, dear Bard, till the world shall tire of the neat and fit, of Humour and Wit, of Hood, of Prior, of the lighter lyre! And that will be never—while men love glee. So thinks
Yours Ever, for one,

LONDON, August 7, 1884.

A. D.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

But for illness I should have responded promptly to your letter concerning my good and honored friend, Dr. Holmes. All I can do now is to beg to be included among those who, though their communications arrive too late for the printer, are among the foremost in congratulations and good wishes, and in being ready to shine for a space in the light that genius reflects on all who recognize it.

MARK MAPES DODGE.

OCEAN GROVE, N. J., Aug. 25, 1884.

BELOVED DOCTOR:

In offering you my cordial salutations on this, your seventy-fifth birthday, permit me to recall to your remembrance the occasion when you were to honor us with an oration at one of the Commencements of the New York Bellevue Hospital Medical College. While functioning as Autocrat of the dinner-table of our mutual friend, Dr. Fordyce Barker, you asked me to escort you on the following day to the Academy of Music, to test its acoustic properties. The next morning you stood upon the stage of said edifice, and I was the sole occupant of the vast auditorium. While seated in one of the front boxes, you favored me with the lines, so popular with unfledged orators, 'My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills,' etc. I have often recounted the contrast between this scene, and the one which followed, a few hours later, when a crowded audience was entranced with the same chordal vocales chanting words of wit and wisdom.

That your powers of thought and of utterance may long be retained, and that bright memories of by-gone scenes may color the sky of your westernward sun, is the sincere prayer of your ardent admirer,

R. OGDEN DOREMUS.

BAR HARBOR, ME., August, 1884.

O. W. H.

AUGUST 29, 1889.

'How shall I crown this child?' fair Summer cried.

'May wasted all her violets long ago;

No longer on the hills June's roses glow,
Flushing with tender bloom the pastures wide.

My stately lilies one by one have died;

The clematis is but a ghost—and lo!

In the fair meadow-lands no daisies blow;

How shall I crown this Summer child?' she sighed.

Then quickly smiled. 'For him, for him,' she said,

'On every hill my golden-rod shall flame,

Token of all my prescient soul foretells.

His shall be golden song and golden fame—

Long golden years with love and honor wed,—

And crowns, at last, of silver immortelles!

JULIA C. R. DORR.

THE MAPLES, RUTLAND, VT., 18 Aug., 1884.

A Spoke from the 'Hub.'

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I should be quite content with being put down as one who long ago learned to love and admire Dr. Holmes as an author and a man. But where are the successors of that famous quartet whose lives have spanned two distinct eras

in our literary history? It is undoubtedly true that as we grow older, we fall into the habit of using a sort of a mental telescope by which the past is not only brought nearer, but is kept more constantly in view. So I now find myself thinking of Dr. Holmes's earlier triumphs. His 'Old Ironsides' set my young blood boiling as it never boiled before, and for me, certainly, he has never written anything better. I believe there are more old boys who can repeat to-day that little string of stinging verses than any other poem in the language. When it was spoken in our school, as it regularly was, being so great a favorite with all of us, by the time that the orator got as far as

Nail to the mast her holy flag!

every small face would be white, and every little fist doubled up with excitement. Give me a poet who can stir the blood once in a while, and who can now and then get outside his lady's boudoir!

When I first became a reader of Dr. Holmes's verses, I said to myself: 'This is the American Hood,' having the same instinctive grasp for the humorous side of everything, the same quick glance for the foibles and frailties of mankind; but when the brilliant essayist came to charm us with the graces of his style and his masterly insight of character, all felt that a master hand had taken up the pen. In this field, certainly, I regard the Autocrat as monarch of all he surveys. Long may that same firm yet kindly hand continue to cut away the shams and impurities from our social life, and to give us, with the realism of to-day, the flavor of that ancient courtliness, which, alas! is almost extinct.

In closing, I must express regret that Dr. Holmes has not made greater use of the legends which his native soil has borne so abundantly, and whose atmosphere he may almost be said to have breathed from infancy. But a man like him is never old, and at more than three score the genial Autocrat's beneficent sway will no doubt still further illuminate what must long stand for the golden age of American letters.

BOSTON, August 22, 1884. SAMUEL ADAMS DRAKE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

It gives me great pleasure to join in congratulations to Dr. Holmes. When I was hardly more than a lad I first learned of his existence by encountering 'The Last Leaf,' which I forthwith committed to memory. That was long ago;—and I now recite the same verses to my grandchildren with undiminished pleasure and admiration. It has been my bad luck never to see Dr. Holmes's face, and I cannot imagine that any word of mine will be of particular significance to him whose age is not exactly venerable but altogether amiable. But let me, as one of the chorus, add my admiring congratulations to those of all who delight in his brilliant work.

EDWARD EGGLESTON.

OWL'S NEST, LAKE GEORGE, 15 Aug., 1884.

DEAR DR. HOLMES:

I gladly avail myself of the opportunity to offer you my cordial congratulations and best wishes on the recurrence of another birthday. You have had the rare satisfaction of being the author of equally attractive prose and verse—prose which has in it much poetry, poetry which contains in it no prose. My best wish is that, having reached that 'vale' of years, which Wordsworth styles 'the final eminence,' 'above the host of ever-humming insects,' you may enjoy to the full the advantage which this exalted position gives.

What more than that the severing should confer
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,
And hear the mighty stream of tendency
Uttering for elevation of our thought
A clear, sonorous voice, inaudible
To the vast multitude.

I am faithfully yours,
MINNEWASKA, N. Y., August 22, 1884. GEORGE P. FISHER.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I send my warm congratulations to the Autocrat, for whom I have always felt admiration and affection. It is right that such sagacity, such kindness, and such gentle humor, should rule in the world; and to such an autocrat I feel like saying, in ancient phrase: 'O, King, live forever!'

PETERSHAM, MASS., Aug. 16, 1884.

JOHN FISKE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

It has often seemed to me that Dr. Holmes's inevitable gayety, his joyousness and exhilaration of mind, his exuberant sportiveness, which make him a cause of bright emotions in his generation, have in a measure concealed the deep earnestness of the man, his love of truth, his devotion to humanity, his passion for excellence. Not that these were ever doubted, but they were less conspicuous than they would have been if his reputation had been that of a philosopher rather than that of a wit. To be sure, in 1863 he delivered, on the 4th of July, an oration before the City Authorities of Boston which throbs all through with moral feeling, and is as remarkable for insight into causes as it is for patriotic enthusiasm. But that was more than twenty years ago; eloquence was common then, patriotism was universal, and even ordinary people soared on wings of hope. The everyday occasions of life furnish a better test than these high-strung moments do. Dr. Holmes's favorite researches have led him through the mysterious borderland which lies between physiology and psychology, and have brought him into close acquaintance with questions of ethics and religion. The very titles to some of his papers in the volume called 'Pages from an Old Volume of Life,' 'Mechanism in Thought and Morals,' 'Crime and Automatism,' show how profound was his interest in what is called the higher class of speculations. The same volume contains his essay on Jonathan Edwards, which evinces a strong concern for the spiritual well-being of mankind, as well as an exhaustive reading of theology in that direction.

It is generally understood that he is at present engaged on a biography of Emerson for the American Men-of-Letters Series. This book will not in the least interfere with the fuller 'Life' which Mr. Cabot is preparing with all the letters and papers before him; it is an estimate rather, demanding critical perception and sympathetic appreciation. This work is the more significant inasmuch as it lies outside of the author's regular pursuits and, it is supposed, aloof from his earlier proclivities; but no disciple of Mr. Emerson could throw himself with more heartiness into his task. He has studied admiringly all Mr. Emerson's books, he has carefully read whatever has been written about him, he has gleaned diligently from the recollections of those who were intimate with him, he has taken solitary walks with his subject on his mind, he has slept and waked on his theme, and has employed, not his intellect merely, but his soul, in an endeavor to get at the truth.

Dr. Holmes's courage is as remarkable as his conscientiousness. At the close of his essay on Jonathan Edwards occurs the following extraordinary language: 'So the doubter should be glad that he is doubted; the rationalist respect the obduracy of the dogmatist; and all the mighty explosives with which the growth of knowledge has furnished us should be used rather to clear the path for those who come after us, than to shatter the roofs which have long protected and still protect so many of our humble and trusting fellow-creatures.' And this after a grave assault on the views of Edwards; this after declaring that 'the present state of our knowledge compels us to consider the narrative on which this (the "Fall of Man") is based as a disproved, or at the best an unproved, story, and to consign it, with the cohering doctrine of sin and all other inferences dependent upon it, to the nebulous realm of Asiatic legends.' This blending of scepticism with faith, of boldness with

humility, of frankness with kindness, of outspokenness with considerateness,—this union of private conviction and of cheerful willingness that the whole truth should be known, this demand that each shall contribute his share, coupled with the desire that all may be improved, attests a wide, cordial, aspiring intelligence. Such a spirit as this would put a new face upon discussion.

O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

BEVERLY FARMS, MASS., August 14, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

In our gratitude to Dr. Holmes for all the pleasure and the profit which his wit and his wisdom have given us, let us not forget how greatly, by his novels, he has enriched our literature. So long as life smiles on him, and he can regard with keen parental pride the new fame now gathering around his junior name, we may be permitted to pray that it may be many and many a year before the name we love to hear shall be carved on the tomb.

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS.

WALLINGFORD, PA., 20 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I thank you for the honor you have done me in inviting me to join in this birthday tribute to the fine genius of whom we are all so proud. May he live a thousand years ! He will. I thank you also for the opportunity of airing the pride I feel in being able to say that I knew Dr. Holmes more than sixty years ago. He was a very small boy then—he is not much larger now, and hardly less of a boy, thank Heaven ! though ever so much greater as a man—thank Heaven for that, too ! All that I recollect of him then—I have pleasure in recalling it now—was his laughing acceptance of certain poor attempts at wit made by one who was honored with the friendship of his sisters.

W. H. FURNESS.

CAPE MAY CITY, N. J., August 21, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

No invited guest to your literary 'surprise party'—or perhaps one may better say, this literary 'golden wedding'—would willingly be absent. Dr. Holmes easily counts his fifty years of literary life ; and all lovers of good books will gladly congratulate him and his country that on the seventy-fifth anniversary of his birthday he may still be told to his face that 'none know him but to love him, none name him but to praise.' We hear him spoken of oftenest as the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table, but many thousands of his countrymen still oftener think of him as the Friend of the Fireside. In all the many homes where books are taken from shelves for the quiet evening readings, what American author has so many friends ? The old delight to renew the memory of early pleasure, while their mature judgment prompts them to take up some volume of his to read to the children whom they hope to lead by pleasant paths to a love of poetry and a knowledge of pure prose. Greater praise than this can be given to no writer, if it be true ; and that it is true we know when we learn from the apt quotation in familiar speech the esteem which his countrymen feel for Dr. Holmes. Less fruitful topics of discussion have been suggested than whether he has best served his generation who has made it laugh most, or he who has given it the most food for thought. Probably there would not be much question as to which had made his world the happier ; and quite as little doubt whether most persons, if they had the choice, would not be happy rather than wise, if they could not be both. But here Dr. Holmes would be properly ruled out, as illustration for either side ; for his readers are wiser as well as happier for reading him, and, being both, are also better.

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY.

STATEN ISLAND, N. Y., August 22, 1884.

August 29, 1809.

God bless the day !—But He hath blest,
(And all the grateful world doth know it,) That happy day, when, in the West,
Was born the wise and witty poet—
The poet who first to Science sought,
And to the merry muses after ;
Who learned what in no school is taught
The secret of men's tears and laughter.

Be it, O Time, a weary while
Ere, in the land where spirits greet us,
A Shade shall say, (with Shakspeare's smile,)
'There comes the Autocrat to greet us !'

MARION, MASS., 23 Aug., 1884.

R. W. GILDER.

Letter to Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, on his Seventy-fifth Birthday.

SIR :

As age by age, through fell enchantment bound,
The hero of some ancient myth is found,
Wild rocks about him, at the fierce sea's brim,
And all his world an old-wives' tale but him,
His garments, cast upon th' inclement shore,
Such as long since our grandsires' grandsires wore,
While all his gestures and his speech proclaim
Him great revealer of forgotten fame,—

Such, O Musician, dost thou seem to be
To us who con th' Augustan age by thee,
Who hearken to thy verse, to learn thro' it
How DRYDEN to illustrious ORMONDE writ,
Or in thy bright and laughing numbers hope
To catch the secret of the art of POPE ;
Ah ! subtle skill, ah ! bard of dying fires,
Let us but lose thee, and a race expires ;
As long as thou dost keep this treasure thine,
Great Anna's galaxy has leave to shine !

Thou who dost link us with that elder day
When either QUEENSBURY made court to GAY,
Through all the thunders of romantic times,
Through reefs of monstrous quips and shoals of rhymes,
We have steered at last, and, like ships long at sea,
Our latest-born sail home to grace and thee ;
They homeward sail, and find the world they left
Of all but thee, yet not of thee, bereft ;
Still in thy pointed wit their souls explore
Familiar fields where CONGREVE ruled before ;
Still in thy human tenderness they feel
The honest voice and beating heart of STEELE.

Long be it so ; may sheaf be laid on sheaf
Ere thy live garland puts forth its last leaf ;
As in old prints, long may we see, in air,
Thy guardian angel hover o'er thy hair ;
Still may the table, where our fathers sat
To eat of manna, hold its Autocrat ;
Since surely none of all the blest can be
Homesick in heaven, as we on earth, for thee.

And oh ! whilst o'er th' embattled crags afar
Thy practised eyes gaze down the gorge of war,
When through the blinding dust and heat we fight
Against the brazen-helmeted Amalakite,
At height of noon, oh ! lift up both those hands,
To urge new virtue through our fainting bands,
And when we feel our sinews nerved to strike
Envy and error, shame and sloth, alike,
We'll say 'tis well that, while we battle thus,
Our Moses stands on high 'twixt heaven and us.

Sir, Your Most Obligated and Most Obedient Servant,
LONDON, 7th Aug., 1884. EDMUND GOSSE.

Of the Chief,—and To Him.

He taught me my geology ;
 From him I knew
 How, in their Rabble Rout,
 The Crazy Crew
 Of Giants threw
 Their pudding and their plums about.
 He taught me modesty :
 In sitting at his feet,
 I said that I
 Would never try
 To be
 So funny as is he ;
 And this—dear CRITIC—will account for me.
 And, how to breakfast, he
 Has taught the world ; to be
 Wise in such wise as wisdom's self is wise,
 Yet playful, kind and true ;
 To mingle Old and New,
 And well the mixture brew,
 With fittest reason
 The bowl to season,
 Then ladle out profuse to you and me.
 But when the war-cloud growls and lowers
 Above the lands,
 The poet stands
 And tells the coward how to try,
 And tells the bravest how to die ;
 Tyrtaeus sings, and cheers his boys and ours !
 Blessings and thanks and praise,
 In stumbling prose, in sweetest lays ;
 And if grief come
 Even to a prophet-poet's home,
 To him some measure of the peace and faith,
 The hope and strength which conquer death,
 Which, in our darker days,
 With all a poet's prophecy,
 And all a prophet's poetry,
 And all a wise man's wisdom, he
 Has sent to comfort you and me.

August 29, 1884.

E. E. HALE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I read the first two or three chapters of 'The Autocrat' twenty-six years ago, in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, in what is now Wyoming Territory. One of the chief reasons I had for getting back to civilization was that I might be able to read the rest of it. I had never then seen the genial scholar who wrote it, but five years afterward, when I had need of friends, he was one of the strongest and most steadfast. He has written : 'Our brains are seventy-year clocks. The Angel of Life winds them up once for all, then closes the case and gives the key into the hands of the Angel of the Resurrection.' Fortunately for the world, his brain has proved to be a clock wound up to go more than seventy years. That it may yet have many years of good time-keeping before it, ere the weights run down and the pendulum ceases to tick, is the sincere wish of his friend,

NEW YORK, Aug. 15, 1884. WILLIAM A. HAMMOND.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I am glad of an opportunity to join the admirers of the Autocrat—as one of the most enthusiastic of their number—in a friendly tribute on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of his birth. His genial wit has delighted his contemporaries for more than a half-century, and during all that time it has ever been wise and humane—never perverse, never unkind,—and no sting has remained in consequence of the hilarious mirth he has created. Is it surprising that a great multitude of admirers pray that his afternoon sun may tarry long in its descent ?

CONCORD, MASS., 22 August, 1884. W. T. HARRIS.

Our Laureate.

ONE day from groves of pine and palm,
 The poets of the sky and cover
 Had come to greet with song and psalm
 The whip-poor-will—their woodland lover.
 All sang their best, but one clear note
 That fairly voiced their admiration
 Was his—who only sang by rote—
 The mock-bird's modest imitation.
 So we, who'd praise the bard who most
 Is poet of each high occasion,
 Who'd laud our laureate, and toast
 The blithe Toast-Master of the Nation,—
 To celebrate his fête to-day,
 In vain each bard his praise rehearses :
 The best that we can sing or say
 Is but an echo of his verses.

GLASGOW, August 11, 1884.

BRET HARTE.

TO DR. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES :

All who follow the literary calling will be glad of the opportunity to offer their birthday congratulations to one who has given them so much help by the brightness of his philosophy, the depth of his sympathies, and the thoroughness and sincerity of his art. May you live long to encourage and stimulate young authors, and to cheer and strengthen the old ones. Your grateful and respectful admirer,

JOHN R. G. HASSARD.

THE ADIRONDACKS, August, 1884.

DEAR DR. HOLMES :

All things come to him who waits ; and I had waited quite long enough, when the present opportunity of disembarrassing myself of some of the stored sweetness that I have gathered from your writings was offered to me.

Parental wisdom early put me on the track of the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table ; but, once on it, I never lost it ; and I trust it may be long indeed before the course comes to an end. One of my earliest failures at school 'declamation' was an attempt to give adequate emphasis to one of your poems, in which the decapitated gentleman accepts a pinch from his executioner's snuff-box ; and the latter used to be connected in my infant mind with the narrator of the tale who never since has dared to be as funny as he could. I remember, too, the impatience with which the various members of the family used to wait for their turn at the new instalment of 'The Autocrat' in each month's *Atlantic* ; and how each month was the brighter for its being there. I remember the first fascination of 'Elsie Venner,' and the charm of 'The Guardian Angel,' but I do not remember how often I have re-read those romances since. They are all a part of the permanent furniture of my mind, and, could I forget them, I should be as forlorn as if the cushions were abstracted from my easy chair, and the light and the fresh air from my study.

I am told that this is your seventy-fifth birthday. Seventy-five years seems a long while ; but few men could have done half the amount of good in the world that you have done, in twice the time. Measured on this principle, your life would already have surpassed the limits of Old Parr ; and, things being as they are, you must still be counted among our youngest men of letters. Certainly, no one who is familiar, as I am, with your latest utterances would be likely, from internal evidence, to imagine that you had passed the apogee of your career. But, at all events, your name will be fresh and fragrant in men's memories when many a younger reputation shall have grown faded and dim. And the profession of an American man-of-letters will never be discredited, so long as it is remembered that such as you belonged to it. Ever and sincerely yours,

NEW YORK, Aug. 29, 1884. JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

I thank you for allowing me to join in an expression of admiration and regard for Dr. Holmes. To attempt to say anything wise or witty in his presence would be worse than carrying coals to Newcastle; but we can at least thank him for the enjoyment and advantage we have had from his writings, and thank Heaven for his seventy-five years and the hope of their indefinite prolongation.

CLEVELAND, OHIO, Aug. 15, 1884.

JOHN HAY.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

It was a happy thought of THE CRITIC to devote one of its numbers to the celebration of the seventy-fifth birthday of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. The Doctor's fame has long been justly national; and there is reason to believe that it is surely broadening with the lapse of years. Poet, Novelist, Essayist, Metaphysician, Philosopher, Psychologist and practical Physician, we may regard him as an example, *par excellence*, of the truth that men of consummate power are seldom specialists. Yet is there a *spécialité* of his which has won for him not merely the admiration, but the love of his kind. I refer to his gentle, far-pervading, and spontaneous humor, a humor the soul of which is sympathy. How often has he 'gladdened' 'this vale of sorrows with a wholesome laugh!' I maintain that the cheerful philosopher, who, in this age of doleful pessimism, sends a 'wholesome laugh' across the harvest-fields of his learning and his wisdom, is a benefactor whose 'price is above rubies.'

Long may the Autocrat, still so lusty in mind and body, live to entertain, no less than instruct us! There being somewhat of antediluvian vigor in him, may we not reasonably hope that, should he gain the honors of a centenarian, no man shall have the right to say of him (as an artist) even then, 'Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage.'

Let me not forget, however, that there rests upon his hearthstone, as I write, a dark, unwonted shadow; that his gray head is bowed, and his house has been left unto him desolate. Congratulation must therefore be chastened by a solemn sympathy. Only let us trust that, through this shadow, and beyond it, he may behold

The glimmering starlight on the Gates of Pearl!

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

"COPSE HILL," GEORGIA, 20 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

Your letter requesting a word appropriate to the proposed celebration, in THE CRITIC AND GOOD LITERATURE, of the seventy-fifth birthday of Dr. O. W. Holmes, finds me in the midst of summer episodes, not sufficiently stationary, or by myself, to write as I would wish of the honored friend whose acquaintance I have enjoyed, and whose progress I have watched, for more than sixty years. Other contributors will be apt to expatiate on his merits as a poet,—unquestionably the most popular of living American poets. And deservedly so; possessing, in addition to his native gift, before all others, what Wordsworth calls 'the accomplishment of verse'—an accomplishment not always found in otherwise meritorious poets. His Muse is strong in the *feet*; not much given to aerial flights; she treads the earth with sure and measured step; never trips in her prosody or fails of rhythmical tact.

But I would rather choose, if time and circumstance permitted, to speak of the rare combination in Holmes of the scientific mind with the gift of song. In this I think that he has no equal, unless it be Albrecht v. Haller, the celebrated naturalist, who was also the most popular German poet of his day. He is not much known, I fancy, to the public at large, as a man of science, for the reason that he has not given to the world any complete scientific treatise. But his pupils in the Harvard Medical College, where he

occupied for many years the chair of Anatomy and Physiology, will credit him with equal merit in that capacity. A marked peculiarity of his mental equipment is psychological insight. How conspicuously, as determined by physical conditions, it shows in that first novel of his—'Elsie Venner,'—consisting, indeed, the main interest of the story.

He has essayed many kinds of composition, and excelled in all. It may be truly said of him, as Coleridge said of Goldsmith: 'He did everything happily.' Dr. Johnson had said in substance the same before, in his celebrated epitaph on Goldsmith, in Westminster Abbey. The quotation is hackneyed, but the application to Holmes is so perfect that I cannot forbear saying: 'Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.'

FREDERIC H. HEDGE.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., Aug. 18, 1884.

To Oliver Wendell Holmes.

An Invitation to England, from a Brother-Poet.

When Genius from the furthest West—
Sierras' wilds* and Poker Flat †—
Can seek our shores with filial zest,
Why not the genial Autocrat?

Why is this burden on us laid,
That friendly London never greets
The peer of Locker, Moore, and Praed
From Boston's almost-neighbour streets?

His earlier and maturer powers
His own dear land might well engage,
We only ask a few kind hours
Of his serene and vigorous age.

Oh for a glimpse of glorious Poe!
His Raven grimly answers 'Never!'—
Will Holmes's milder Muse say 'No,'
And keep our hands apart for ever?

HOUGHTON.

FRYSTON HALL, FERRYBRIDGE, YORKSHIRE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

As Dr. Holmes can have no warmer admirer than I am, I thank you heartily for the privilege of joining in the congratulations to be offered to him on his seventy-fifth birthday, even though I fail to see the appropriateness of the offering. It savors rather of Buddhististic than of Christian philosophy to congratulate a man on having left so much of life behind him; while we who love him and are grateful for endless stores of wit and wisdom, of kindly humor and wholesome enjoyment, would respond much more zealously if we were asked to congratulate ourselves on seventy-five years of him in the future rather than in the past.

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 12, 1884.

HENRY C. LEA.

Dr. Oliver W. Holmes.

From Boston Town they write to say,
Their bard is seventy-five to-day,
And all the world must know it:
But while to him this stave I twine
Wish his birthday could be mine,
And he could be my poet.

LONDON, August, 1884.

FREDERICK LOCKER.

BELOVED PHYSICIAN OF BODY AND MIND :

I have been acquainted with you from my young manhood, yet I have never looked upon your face but once, and then it was radiant with the light of good humor. I have never listened to your voice but once, and then it uttered these words of wisdom: 'Statistics show that the longest-lived class of men are the members of the medical profes-

* Joaquin Miller. † Bret Harte.

sion. The reason is, they know enough not to take medicine. It would be well for mankind if the contents of a majority of the drug-shops were cast into the sea; but it would be bad for the fishes.' You are living testimony to the truth of your assertion, made thirty years ago.

Allow me, in this large assemblage of your brethren, to offer you a Ciceronian congratulation. Tully, as you know, discoursing on the subject of old age, says: 'An old man, indeed, has nothing to hope for; yet he is in so much the happier state than the young one, since he has already attained what the other is only hoping for. The one is wishing to live long; the other has lived long.' I therefore congratulate you because of the completion of the cycle of years, which, according to the formula of Faraday, has brought you to the verge of old age, rich, very rich in the ample possessions which that event has secured. That you may reign a quarter of a century longer, the Autocrat of a breakfast-table, in the full enjoyment of the conditions asked for in Macbeth's toast; and that, by your life and labors in the future, you may add many precious chapters to 'Holmes's Annals,' second series, is the sincere prayer of your friend,

THE RIDGE, August, 1884. BENSON J. LOSSING.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I am just now in receipt of your note, and gladly avail myself of your permission to add my heartiest congratulations to those of thousands of others, who owe service and thanks to the most kindly and wise and witty of Autocrats. May all the honors and the joys of Age attend him, as he draws nigh to the end of the Long Path.

DONALD G. MITCHELL.

EDGEWOOD, NEW HAVEN, CONN., 23 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

When your friendly note gave me permission to join the company of those who were to do a certain kind of literary honor to Dr. Holmes on his seventy-fifth birthday, I ran at once for my quill and began an address:

Eighteen hundred and nine, you say:
Born behind the Puritan's Bay;
Nation then in a 'one-hoss' way,
Getting its 'dander' up for the fray,
First 'cute thing in Jonathan's day—
Jonathan then just out of his teens,
Doubling his fist up for New Orleans.
Six years later the 'dander riz';
You, with your little comical phiz,
Well out of pantalets, stood on your toes,
And tickled President Kirkland's nose,
Or, very likely, in Sunday bibs,
Poked your dad in his orthodox ribs.

I was rattling on in this way, and had it in my mind to give a canto or thereabouts to each administration, rehabilitating as well as I could all the funny things by which Cambridge and Boston, for these fifty years past, have been, or might have been, convulsed, and showing in some extra cantos the intimate connection each joke had with some important event in the nation's history—the joke and the event, so to speak, leaning on each other. For Boston in those days was certainly the Hub of our little division of the universe, and no serious thing occurred in the nation that she did not lend a fellow to help in the serious side of it, and another fellow to mark the humorous side, and sometimes one, like Dr. Holmes, who was quite capable of lending a hand in both divisions. I soon found, however, how impossible it was, in a reasonable number of cantos, to do justice to the nation's deeds, or to Boston's share in them, and (in all seriousness) to the important part played by the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table in reconciling us to the large portion of glory due to the Hub; so I gave it up, and now close this very considerable introduction with the following brief sentiment:

'Little I ask, my wants are few,'—

Mainly the things you once said went
To meet the case of a man like you
Of simple habit and mind content.
Less than that little would keep one alive,
Spiced with your wit at seventy-five.

JAMES HERBERT MORSE.

COTUIT, MASS., 25 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

No lover of exact science, who has enjoyed the acquaintance of the Autocrat, can miss an opportunity to pay his tribute of admiration to the poet-teacher of soundness in thinking. Those who call Holmes a humorist should be pitted as we pity the blind, the deaf, and the maimed. He should rather be described as one who takes logic, common-sense, social philosophy and political sagacity, and transforms their tenets into the most beautiful creations of the fancy without destroying their essence. Concealed beneath every stroke of the pencil is a lesson of practical wisdom, which the thinking reader can apply to the problems of life. The boy who recites 'The One-Horse Shay,' if he makes proper use of his lesson, has taken his first step in preparing for the study of logic, mechanics and political economy. There is no lesson in practical politics which the American people more need than they do that contained in the opening paragraph of 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.' Among public men we find algebraic intellects firmly grasping the great problems of legislation, finance, and administration, but children in the power of judging whether Smith is a wise man or a fool. We have also arithmetical intellects; administrators who put the right man into the right place with unerring sagacity; but who can no more understand the tariff question than they can calculate an eclipse. If the public understood their lesson, they would choose the one class for legislative, and the other for executive, positions.

A vigorous old age is Nature's testimonial of good conduct on the part of a man and his ancestors. May Dr. Holmes long live in the enjoyment of all the rights, privileges and immunities to which his certificate entitles him.

SIMON NEWCOMB.

WASHINGTON, D. C., 19 August, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

I have received your letter, and I do not like to leave it unanswered, although it is with anything but boldness that I take my place among those who offer words of thankfulness and greeting to such a man as Dr. Holmes. The pleasure which he has given me dates back to my earliest boyhood. My father used to repeat his verses to me in days when Boston was a small town, and omnibuses were the only public means of going to it from Cambridge, the smaller town where I then lived. Dr. Holmes's poems and the 'Rejected Addresses' were the earliest verse with which I made friends. The delight which Dr. Holmes's writings then gave me has grown with my growth. From that time to this I have been a constant and loving reader of his prose and verse, and often a charmed listener to his wonderful spoken words. I can set no limits to the gratitude which I feel for him.

F. W. PALFREY.

BEVERLY FARMS, MASS., August 21, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

My greeting to Dr. Holmes comes from a sick-room and must be folded in a word. I thank you for the opportunity to be represented among those who think of him upon his birthday, and I would fain be credited not for what I *can* say, but for what I *would*, to express my reverence for the genius, and affection for the friend whom our hearts delight to honor.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., 16 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

It was a happy inspiration that prompted you to make your issue of the 29th inst. a 'Holmes number,' and there are a great many of your readers who will, I am sure, rejoice in the opportunity of mingling their congratulations with your own in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

What a long and beneficent ministry his has been! There are those in all lands to-day to whom his mingled wit and wisdom have been at once sunshine and inspiration, and who can scarce hear his name without a thrill of gratitude to one who has both sung and spoken with such unflinching grace and with such unerring truth and insight. To few men has it ever been given to preach with such cheer and helpfulness as has this honored and beloved preacher, whose lay pulpit has been a throne of 'sweetness and light' to which all sorts and conditions of men have eagerly and gladly turned. Proud we are that we Americans may claim him as all our own,—his crisp humor as keen, but never as cutting, as his New England winds,—his mellow philosophy, the echo of all our best experiences,—and his perennial gift of song, the delight of our youth and our age alike! Long may he be spared to the profession of letters in which, not alone, he has won eminence and honor, and late may dawn the day when his tireless hand and brain shall have ceased from their fruitful and beneficent labors! 'Our Holmes,' I give you, 'whose gifts have made uncounted other homes brighter and better by their steadfast shining!' And I am, in this homage and gratitude, heartily yours,

NEW YORK, August 15, 1884. HENRY C. POTTER.

The Silent Tribute.

COUNT it not strange that I can speak no word,
Master, of all thy proud fame means to me ;—
Slowly should come words to be coined for thee.
Count it not strange ; nor think my heart less stirred
With praise than others, though thou hast not heard
An echo of its praises. Others see
The silent door,—but thou dost hold the key,
Knowing therein thou art of all preferred.
So shouldst thou blame a tardy messenger,
Who, bringing in his hand, of rich design,
A glowing goblet to beguile thy cares,
Should loiter ;—hastening not, though thou demur ;—
Lest he should spill the rare and fragrant wine,
Because so full the brimming cup he bears.

August 29, 1884. ALICE WELLINGTON ROLLINS.

DEAR DR. HOLMES :

Through the medium of THE CRITIC allow me to present my compliments, and to earnestly hope this birthday may be supplemented by many others, thus securing to the world a continuation of the sound philosophy and charming rhetoric that have so long been a legacy from your pen.

H. W. SHAW ('Josh Billings').

SARATOGA SPRINGS, August 18, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

Your notification comes at a time when it chances that Dr. Holmes is my near companion. After the charming duty of again reading, as a reviewer, all his verse and prose, I find one vivid impression left by this exercise, *viz.*—that to him, as a man, the saying, 'Ah! si la jeunesse savait, si la vieillesse pouvait,' is quite inapplicable. What the young Holmes didn't know, was 'not worth knowing.' He was born 'cute and wise.' If he ever had a vealy period, it does not show in his works, or in those big-lettered anachronisms withal—the *ante-mortem* biographies, which have given our merry poet and homilist the merriest of modern entertainments, the privilege of reading his own tombstone. Here, too, is a man, old by the calendar, who still 'can' what he

likes. You say it is five years since we went to sing our little songs upon his seventieth birthday, when of course the carol of the septuagenarian himself, like that of the first tenor on his benefit-night, was the best of the occasion. Now, as then,

What avail, fellow-minstrels, our crotchets and staves
Though your tribute, like mine, rises straight from the heart,
Unless, while the bough on his laurel-bush waves,
To his own sangerfest the chief guest lend his art?

Five years, and meantime we have had his unexcelled portraiture of Emerson, before the Massachusetts Historical Society, and such verse as the stanzas on the Judgeship of his son, and those heroics—of the very best—in defence of his 'square-toed song,' to which New Yorkers listened but a year ago last spring. Plainly Dr. Holmes's Gil Blas, be he never so outspoken, is in no danger of being dismissed. The sinking sun has only strengthened the shadow of our poet's robes.

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

NEW CASTLE, N. H., Aug. 21, 1884.

MY DEAR DR. HOLMES :

As around the head of a family—say of Virginia—gather his cousins, his second cousins, and his cousins so far removed that he never heard of them, wishing him joy and good fortune, so come we all upon this your birthday, and would be glad to come any other day if we could find a decent excuse for it, to wish you, not all unselfishly, many years of life, and strength and work. And when, on some morning, further removed than the remotest of your literary kin, you shall push back your chair, fold up your napkin, and, rising from the table, say, 'After this I breakfast without you,' we will look at each other and smile, and each think to himself, with a little comfortable vanity, 'Not if St. Peter be the man of discernment I take him to be.'

Very sincerely,

FRANK R. STOCKTON.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA., August, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC :

Your proposition of the complimentary number to Dr. Holmes meets a warm response in my heart. Dr. Holmes, besides being a brilliant poet, is a noble man, a true friend, and I only regret that the state of my health will not allow me to offer *more* than my warmest sympathy with such a movement as yours. This summer I have been obliged to restrict myself to the most necessary business and family letters.

The Doctor was *more* than kind to me on my birthday celebration, and I remember his poem, 'At the Summit,' as such a charming expression of friendship and poetic feeling as only he could write. Since then, however, I have felt myself *going down*, but rejoice to hear that the good Doctor is still alert and cheery.

May he long be spared to gladden the hearts of his friends and be the pride of his native city.

HARTFORD, August 20th, 1884.

H. B. STOWE.

To Dr. Holmes, on His Seventy-fifth Birthday.

BE not yet silent, Singer and Sage ;
Best is song's vintage ripened by age ;
Pour thy wine freely, our cares to assuage.

Hasten not whither, veiled from all sight ;
The peers of thy spirit sit vested in white ;
Let them long miss thee, to be our delight.

Hoard not thy music to sing to their ears—
Thy mirth and thy music, chasers of tears !
Pour thy wine freely ; song ripens with years !

EDITH M. THOMAS.

GENEVA, O., August 21, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

About the year 1865, I got acquainted with 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.' At that time I was a youth, resuming the course of my studies, interrupted (for the four years just passed) by the War. Some old numbers of *The Atlantic Monthly*, probably those of 1857-8, had come into my hands, and I used to go to the side of a clear little spring-stream to read them. My favorite seat was under a huge pine tree. It was there that a portrait of Dr. Holmes formed itself in my mind, and it has been there ever since. How well I recollect the first effect of that genial humor and perennial wisdom; in fact, the first effect remains. I was hungry and thirsty—after four years of War—for something to refresh my mind withal. I look back now to that seat under the pine by the brook among the North Georgian hills, and feel the influence of the mountain breeze, the terebinthine odor, and the elusive fragrance of liquid-amber, whilst I lose myself among the creations of the Autocrat; and I am aware of a finer aroma and a fresher essence than ever strayed from gum or resin.

Here is a beaker of wild muscadine, from the banks of the Coosawattee, to the health of the only American who, out of a generous regard for the welfare of his admirers, has bravely refused to be as funny as he could!

MAURICE THOMPSON.

CRAWFORDSVILLE, IND., Aug. 15, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

In answering your invitation to join in the proposed tribute to the Autocrat, I experience an embarrassment of riches; the occasion suggests so much that cannot be compassed within the brief space of a letter. What phase is there of this many-sided life upon which one might not wax eloquent? His fine social qualities and brilliant wit, his lyric fire and grace, his scientific acquirements and life-long labors in an arduous profession, which render so much more extraordinary his splendid achievements in literature. But what impresses me most, in considering the man and his career, is the immense fund of joyousness in his character, which rays its light in so many directions. It is this which has enabled him to accomplish the work which must have been so much more to him in the doing than even in the fame it has brought. It is this which has preserved him to us, still a foremost figure in our life and literature; and it is chiefly for this that he is to be congratulated upon the goodly length of years allotted to him, of which let us trust that many still remain for him to live, happy in himself, and the cause of happiness in others. J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

KENNEBUNKPORT, ME., Aug. 19, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Here in the shade on the hill-top, with the mercury up among the hundreds (or is it the thousands?), I have my own private opinion as to the world's being in existence long enough to let you carry out that loyal and gracious plan of making *THE CRITIC* of the 29th inst. a 'Holmes number'; but if you should happen to remain unmelted so long (and of course if anyone can resist the general conflagration, it must be the critic) let me have the privilege of joining with all the others, near and far, in greeting with salutations of gratitude and reverence our glorious and perpetual Autocrat, on this, his seventy-fifth birthday. I take it that you would hardly care to have each of us say all we could say about him as poet, wit, thinker, scholar, talker and man. So I shall mention to you only this: I was a young man in college when the world began to overhear his talks from the head of *The Breakfast Table*; and for my part I can never again know just such intellectual quickening and delight as we young fellows all got from those talks. The plums and the cherries are now nowhere near so big and so sweet as they used to be; and nothing is uttered in these latter days to give one the stir of being which we used to have come to

us out of those discourses. My opinions about Presidents, Governors, Kings, Emperors and Popes have undergone much change since then; but as to Autocrats—my admiration has never budged an inch. MOSES COIT TYLER.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N. Y., August, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Loving and honoring Dr. Holmes, in my clumsy way, I should be rejoiced to join in the congratulations of all the world of letters on the seventy-fifth anniversary of his birth; but I have not the grace to frame anything appropriate to the occasion. How could it be expected of a statistician? All I could utter would be what some shapeless, primeval monster, lying in the muddy ooze of an antediluvian river bank, might have said to a radiant rainbow hummingbird, darting hither and thither with the speed of light: 'How can you do it?'

BOSTON, August 14, 1884.

FRANCIS A. WALKER.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

A health we drink to Holmes: May the unmowed grass glow ever on, beneath the sheltering snow of many a long and happy winter yet; and may every spring bring leaflets green, till life and love are spent!

GEORGE E. WARING, JR.

NEWPORT, R. I., Aug. 30, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Your request reaches me too late for a proper response. Besides, I am not sure that I like the habit of celebrating birthday anniversaries. If the dear Dr. Holmes, now, were growing younger, and we could score a year off his age by this recognition of his genius, how heartily would I join you. If we were at the beginning of the series of those beautiful books which have endeared him to two generations, I should like to celebrate the event with fireworks and illuminations. Now the most one can do is soberly to express his love for the man, and his gratitude to the writer, who has so long furnished one of his chiefest intellectual pleasures, and given him reason for pride in the name of American.

May God bless and long preserve to us the author whose October has the fragrance of May.

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

WINCHESTER, VA., Aug. 19th, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Returning home, I find your kind letter of August 9. I certainly join heartily in spirit with those who would celebrate the approaching birthday of Oliver Wendell Holmes; for I am one of those who feel themselves in debt to him for his work both in prose and poetry. Though I cannot send anything for your memorial worthy of preservation, I may at least join in congratulations and best wishes to him.

ANDREW D. WHITE.

PRESIDENT'S ROOMS, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 25 Aug.

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Poet, essayist, novelist, humorist, scientist, ripe scholar and wise philosopher, if Dr. Holmes does not, at the present time, hold in popular estimation the first place in American literature, his rare versatility is the cause. In view of the inimitable prose writer, we forget the poet; in our admiration of his melodious verse, we lose sight of 'Elsie Venner' and 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.' We laugh over his wit and humor, until, to use his own words,

We suspect the azure blossom that unfolds upon a shoot,

As if Wisdom's old potato could not flourish at its root;

and perhaps the next page melts us into tears by a pathos

only equalled by that of Sterne's sick Lieutenant. He is Montaigne and Bacon under one hat. His varied qualities would suffice for the mental furnishing of half-a-dozen literary specialists.

To those who have enjoyed the privilege of his intimate acquaintance, the man himself is more than the author. His genial nature, entire freedom from jealousy or envy, quick tenderness, large charity, hatred of sham, pretence and unreality, and his reverent sense of the eternal and permanent, have secured for him something more and dearer than literary renown—the love of all who know him. I might say much more: I could not say less. May his life be long in the land.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

AMESBURY, MASS., 8th mo. 18, 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

In appearing among the number of friends to congratulate the admirable Autocrat on the completion of his seventy-fifth year, I can only join the chorus of the hundreds of thousands who, while wishing his genial and useful life prolonged yet for many a year, feel in their own experience that he has imparted so much of the heavenly amenities to a life on earth that, if the heaven to be is not less desirable, we can at least exercise greater patience in waiting admission to it. Dr. Holmes's work affords a charming illustration of the genial influence of literature upon the lives of those who receive it in their own hearts, and then upon the life of society and the nation. And it is worthy of especial observation that in Dr. Holmes's case the exercise of literary gifts has not been found incompatible with lifelong devotion to the duties of a professional chair recognized as exactly scientific.

ALEXANDER WINCHELL.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, 25 Aug., 1884.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CRITIC:

Thanks for the opportunity of writing in the congratulations you offer to the honored man-of-letters who to-day rounds out the third quarter of a century in his life of such varied service to his country and the world. Who else wears so many crowns as he?—the irresistible humorist and wit; the liberal, bold, profound and subtle thinker; the poet, the essayist, the novelist; the man-of-science, the consummate teacher, the skilful physician; the unselfish patriot, the honest, faithful, tender friend. It is a privilege to send to him through you this tribute of something more than mere admiration and respect; to acknowledge a thousand keen delights derived from the wit, wisdom, pathos and beauty of his writings; and to thank him for corrected errors, for helpful suggestions, for stimulus and inspiration.

It is with an emotion closely akin to filial love that I join you and your friends to-day in assuring him of heartfelt sympathy in the sorrows he is called to meet, and the most sincere desire that the years (many, we trust) remaining to him still, may be rich with ripened fruit and full of tranquil happiness. *Serius, serenus, in coelum redeat.*

PRINCETON, N. J., Aug. 29, 1884. C. A. YOUNG.

Notes

—THE regular departments of this week's CRITIC are crowded out by the pressure of Holmes matter.

—Mr. Marion Crawford has written a new novel and in a new vein. It is called 'A Heartless Politician,' and will be published at once in London by Chapman & Hall.

—Monsignor Capel has been offended by the claim of some of the Episcopal clergy that they belong to the true Catholic Church, and he sends forth a pamphlet bearing the title of 'Catholic: An Essential and Exclusive Attribute of the True Church' (D. & J. Sadlier), in which he defends his own Church as alone entitled to that name. His arguments are those long since employed by the Roman Church, clearly and incisively stated by a skilful dialectician. The better part of the pamphlet is the appendix, in which are given the opinions of the early Fathers on the unity and catholicity of the Church.

—In the death of Henry George Bohn, at the age of eighty-eight, literature sustains a double loss. Mr. Bohn was not only famous as a publisher of a high class of books, but was also an author, and the editor of many books in different departments, from studies of Shakspeare to treatises on pottery and porcelain. He started in the book business in 1831 and retired in 1876, after a prosperous and distinguished career.

—Mr. C. G. D. Roberts, who has been succeeded in the editorship of the *Toronto Week* by Mr. W. Philip Robinson (not Hamilton), contributes to *The Current* of Aug. 23 a poem entitled 'In Notre Dame.'

—In an article on the misuse of the letter *g* in New England, *The Christian Register*, of Boston, says: 'The child that begins to talk by using such words as goin', doin', seein', eatin', that goes through the primary and grammar school cipherin' and parsin', and is occupied in the high school with composin' and translatin', will wake up some day perchance to a knowledge of the atrocity of such pronunciation, only to find himself a slave to a habit as firmly fixed and difficult of cure as the opium habit. The Old Man of the Sea was easy to shake off in comparison.'

—Moncure D. Conway is printing a volume of 'Farewell Sermons.'

—Brander Matthews's edition of Sheridan's comedies will be published in London by Chatto & Windus. The same firm will publish Julian Hawthorne's 'Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife.'

—We are glad to learn that Harry W. French's story is 'The Only One' of its kind. (Lee & Shepard.) It is almost worth reading, however, for the amusement afforded by its preposterous combination of English lord, rascality, poison, fire, St. Bernard dogs, shivers, shudders, more poison, prison cells, abductions, and more poison, culminating in the astounding fact that five different women and one man with whom the hero is brought in contact at different times in his life prove to be one woman in different disguises.

—The *Atlanta Constitution*—the influential Southern journal of which 'Uncle Remus' is the editor—has just moved into a fine new building and begun the use of a Hoe perfecting press.

—An historical romance by Lucy Ellen Guernsey, 'Loveday's History: A Tale of Many Changes,' is announced by T. Whitaker.

—'Practical Forestry,' by Andrew S. Fuller, illustrated (Orange Judd Co.), is elaborate, careful, suggestive and helpful. It contains a treatise on the propagation, planting, and cultivation (with a description, and the botanical and popular names) of the indigenous trees of the United States, both evergreen and deciduous, together with notes on a large number of the most valuable exotic species. The book is really practical, and seems to leave no branch of the subject untouched.

—Miss Amelia B. Edwards contributes a very interesting paper on the late Sir Erasmus Wilson to *The Academy* of Aug. 16. Sir Erasmus was not only famous as a dermatologist but in literature and archæology. He leaves a wife but no children. His wealth was great and his charity far-reaching.

—We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Mary Clemmer Hudson, at Washington, on the 18th inst. Mrs. Hudson made a distinguished name in journalism, but died of over-work.

—'The Man She Cared For,' by F. W. Robinson (Franklin Square Library), is a book of 'scenes'; but it is interesting, for the most conservative of us like a 'scene' once in a while, and enjoy the element of constant surprise in a well written sensational story. There is no murder in Mr. Robinson's tale, and no forgery; but there is almost everything else of a stirring nature, while the story remains, as we have said, interesting and well told.

—The Rivingtons of London have begun the publication of an admirable series of little books which they call 'Highways of History.' The object is to give a consecutive treatment of special topics in English history, such as social history, the history of religion, the connection between England and Scotland, and the growth of the English colonies. The treatment of these subjects will be adapted for the use of students who have already mastered the general outline of English history, but wish for more connected information with regard to some special point. Each part is to be complete in itself. The editor is Louise Creighton, who writes the first volume in the series, which is devoted to 'The Government of England.' This little work is well written and is packed full of information. The series must be of great convenience to students and readers.